

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 158822

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TO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS ON SIAD INTERVIEW WITH AMERICAN JOURNALISTS

1. NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST, IN DISPATCHES FROM MOGADISCIO, QUOTED PRESIDENT SIAD AS SAYING HE OFFERED RE-FUELING AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES IN SOMALI PORTS FOR U.S. NAVY VESSELS IF AMERICANS COME "AS FRIENDS".
2. HENRY TANNER OF NYT AND DUSKO DODER OF POST REPORTED ON SIAD INTERVIEW WITH THREE AMERICAN REPORTERS. SIAD, ACCORDING TO DISPATCHES, DISMISSED DOD SEC SCHLESINGER'S CHARGE THAT HE PERMITTED SOVIET UNION TO ESTABLISH NAVAL BASE AT BERBERA AS "PROVOCATION" AND "PROPAGANDA".
3. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF DODER JULY 4 FRONT PAGE DISPATCH IN POST: THROUGHOUT THREE-HOUR INTERVIEW SIAD BARRE SOUGHT TO EMPHASIZE THAT SOMALIA IS PURSUING A "NEUTRAL" FOREIGN POLICY AT "EQUAL DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO BLOCS". BY DISCLOSING HIS READINESS TO GRANT DOCKING RIGHTS TO U.S. WARSHIPS, A SUBJECT HE DISCUSSED WITH PRESIDENT FORD LAST YEAR IN WASHINGTON, SIAD BARRE ALSO SOUGHT TO UNDERSCORE HIS UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 158822

DESIRE TO COUNTER STRONG SOVIET INFLUENCE IN SOMALIA.

HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS INVITATION TO U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS TO VISIT BERBERA WAS DESIGNED AS

DEMONSTRATION OF SOMALIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AS WELL AS SIGN OF GOOD WILL TOWARD U.S.

"I BELIEVE WE HAVE BEEN MISREPRESENTED AND MISUNDERSTOOD IN AMERICA", PRESIDENT SAID. "OUR STRUGGLE IS AGAINST POVERTY AND DISEASE, NOT WITH OTHER NATIONS. WHY SHOULD WE SEEK CONFRONTATION WITH ANYBODY, MUCH LESS U.S.? ALL WE ARE ASKING IS FOR YOU TO COME HERE AND SEE WHAT IS REALITY. I TOLD PRESIDENT FORD I WANT TO BUILD MY COUNTRY AND I AM JEALOUS FOR MY FREEDOM. I WOULD PREFER POVERTY AND FREEDOM TO RICHES AND SLAVERY. WE HAVE NO REASON TO QUARREL WITH U.S. ON CONTRARY, WE NEED YOUR HELP..."

"OF COURSE, SOVIETS HAVE GIVEN US MUCH HELP AND WE ARE GRATEFUL", PRESIDENT SAID. "THEY HAVE BEEN TEACHING US AND GIVING US ARMS AND TECHNICAL PEOPLE. DURING DROUGHT AND RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES THEY CAME TO OUR AID WITH PLANES AND TRUCKS, AND THESE ARE MANNED BY RUSSIANS. DOES THIS MEAN WE ARE IN THEIR POCKET? NO. BECAUSE OF SOVIET ASSISTANCE HAVE WE SOLD OUR FREEDOM OR OUR SOVEREIGNTY? NO, SIR..."

SPEAKING ABOUT CHARACTER OF HIS SOCIALIST REGIME, SIAD BARRE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE IS CONVINCED THAT THIS COURSE "IS ONLY SOLUTION FOR AFRICA...". IN HIS METHOD, SIAD BARRE IS EMULATING SOVIET BLOCK TECHNIQUES OF REGIMENTATION AND MOBILIZATION OF ENTIRE SOCIETY. HE RULES WITH FIRM HAND AND HIS REGIME IS CLEARLY AUTHORITARIAN. BUT SOMALIA'S "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM" IS VERY AFRICAN IN CHARACTER... SOME SENIOR SOMALI OFFICIALS ALSO FEAR THAT SOMALIA'S TIES WITH SOVIET UNION HAVE BEEN UNJUSTLY MISREPRESENTED BY AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO BUTTRESS WASHINGTON'S ARGUMENT FOR NEED OF U.S. MILITARY FACILITY AT DIEGO GARCIA IN INDIAN OCEAN; (END POST EXCERPTS.)

4. FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF TANNER ARTICLE IN NYT:
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PAGE 03 STATE 158822

"WE ARE FREE", HE SAID- "WE COULD HAVE KEPT SILENT" ABOUT CHARGES. HE ADDED: "I WANTED TO CLEAR AWAY CLOUDS AND THIS MEANS WE WANT AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP".

MR. SIAD SAID THAT HE MADE OFFER OF NAVAL FACILITIES TO PRESIDENT FORD LAST FALL AND THAT HE THOUGHT, AT THE TIME, THAT HE HAD CONVINCED ADMINISTRATION OF HIS GOOD FAITH. BUT THEN WHAT HE CALLED "PROPAGANDA CHARGES" BY MR.

SCHLESINGER AND OTHERS WERE RESUMED. HE INDICATED THAT THIS HAD DELAYED AGREEMENT ON VISIT OF AMERICAN SHIPS...

FREQUENTLY DURING INTERVIEW HE RETURNED WITH OBVIOUSLY

STRONG FEELING TO HIS MAIN THEME--THAT U.S.,PREOCCUPIED WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO NEIGHBORING ETHIOPIA, HAS NEGLECTED SOMALIA AND "MISREPRESENTED" ITS GOVERNMENT AS MOSCOW STYLE SOCIALISTS READY TO BECOME SATELLITE OF SOVIET UNION. HE INSISTED THAT SOMALI POLICY WAS ONE OF NEUTRALITY TOWARD THE SUPERPOWERS. HE DECLARED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS UNALTERABLY OPPOSED TO GIVING ANY MILITARY BASES--AS DISTINCT FROM FACILITIES--TO ANY FOREIGN POWER. SOVIET UNION HAD NOT ASKED HIM FOR A BASE, AND IF IT HAD, GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE ENDED, HE SAID.

"THERE ARE NO WEAPONS UNDER SOVIET CONTROL IN SOMALIA", HE SAID. HE STATED THAT NUMBER OF SOVIET EXPERTS IN SOMALIA WAS "FEWER THAN ONE THOUSAND", ADDING THAT HE COULD NOT BE MORE PRECISE WITHOUT LOOKING AT CURRENT LIST. ALMOST ALL OF THEM ARE IN ARMY, INSTRUCTING SOMALIS IN HANDLING OF MODERN SOVIET WEAPONS, AND SOME ARE TEACHERS, HE SAID.

INTELLIGENCE REPORTS IN U.S. AND BRITAIN HAVE PLACED NUMBER OF SOVIET EXPERTS HERE AT 1,500 TO 3,000, INCLUDING ADVISERS IN VARIOUS MINISTRIES. MR. SIAD DENIED THAT ANY SOMALI MINISTRY HAD SOVIET ADVISERS.

MR. SIAD, SOLIDLY BUILT MAN IN HIS LATE 50S WHO ADVANCED FROM ENLISTED MAN TO COLONEL IN BRITISH ARMY DURING UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 158822

COLONIAL DAYS, INSISTED THAT HIS BRAND OF "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM" WAS STRICTLY AFRICAN AND HOMEGROWN, NOT A COPY OF MOSCOW BRAND. (END NYT EXCERPTS.) SISCO

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